



PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Journal of the APPA

Volume 15 Number 1 March 2020

Editor

Lou Marinoff

Reviews Editor

Leslie Miller

Associate Editor

Johnson Cheung

Technical Consultant

Greg Goode

Legal Consultant

Thomas Griffith

Articles

Carolina Beaini

Hermeneutics and Clinical Philosophy

Pierre Grimes

Philosophical Midwifery and the Platonic Tradition

Michael Noah Weiss

The Edifying Turn:

Is Philosophical Practice in Need of a New Paradigm?

Critique

Shanti Jones

A Moral Argument Against Lying on the Couch

Book Reviews

How We Hope: A Moral Psychology

Reviewed by Fernando Salvetti

Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives

Reviewed by Jörn Kroll

Think Like a Roman Emperor

Reviewed by Tim LeBon

A Philosophy of Humour

Reviewed by Steven Gimbel

Biographies of Contributors

<https://appa.edu>
ISSN 1742-8181

Nemo Veritatem Regit
Nobody Governs Truth

Philosophical Midwifery and the Platonic Tradition

PIERRE GRIMES

NOETIC SOCIETY, COSTA MESA, CA

Abstract

Each of the approaches to philosophical counseling has its own goals, methods, and practice, as does Philosophical Midwifery (PMW), but it needs to be asked which philosophical tradition is PMW a member of, if any? Or, should PMW stand alone and apart from both philosophy and psychology? Since Philosophical Midwifery assumes that human conflicts can be traced to the acceptance of a false belief of the Self, which is called a pathologos in PMW, it presupposes the idea of Self as the fundamental idea of Platonic-Homeric thought. The works of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* and Plato's *Republic* are used for this analysis because the idea of Self is of primary and essential to their thought. The essential propositions of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* will be shown to have similar dynamics to the basic thought found in PMW. The key question found in the study of arithmetic in the training of the philosopher-king in Plato's *Republic* will also be cited, among others, as support for the idea of the Self.

Keywords: *philosophical midwifery, Plato, Proclus, self, logos, pathologos*

If there is a parallel between Philosophical Midwifery¹ (PMW) and the philosophy found in Plato and Proclus, then they either participate in the same philosophical tradition, or PMW may be a mode of psychotherapy and should not be classed among philosophical systems, or PMW should stand alone, independent of these philosophical systems, and cannot be subsumed within systems of psychology. If PMW can be linked either as a whole or a part to the Platonic tradition, then does that addition render it more complete? And, if there is some justification for saying that it is Platonic, what author and work(s) should be selected that best expresses that tradition?

Among Platonists, Proclus has been recognized as having developed the most sophisticated and systematic presentation of the metaphysics of the Platonic tradition.² In Proclus' *Elements of Theology* he argues that the fundamental ideas of his metaphysics can be parallel with the classes and members of the Hellenic Gods.³ These ideas fit into a three-part order of the intelligible, the intellectual, and the mix of the intelligible and the intellectual. They are arranged in their divisions, each possesses a leader and members, sharing a common logos. These three-part divisions have their parallel to the Gods.

If we compare Proclus with PMW we find that key similarities exist between these systems. If the central idea and discovery of Philosophical Midwifery is that a class of problems that block human development have their origin in unsuspected false ideas of the Self, called pathologos beliefs, that function as a system with parts or elements akin to those of Proclus' system, then such a comparison will add support to the notion that they are indeed parallel systems. In addition, if we find that these parallel systems both have leaders and members, and they each have their own logos, or world view, then that will increase the likelihood that they are parallel systems. For, in each family/

clan the particular pathologos has a leader, parent, or surrogate, family members and inner circle, and a particular teaching or pathologos that functions as its own private logos.

The parallel suggests that the one just might be an imitation of the other. Does not the study of anything being imitated need the original to grasp its significance, its origin, and dynamics? And, would the understanding of the original be enhanced by recognizing that it can be copied in a parallel, but diminished order? Surely, if the fundamental ideas of these two systems, the original and its copy, stand to one another as opposites, as logos and pathologos, then knowing only one, or keeping them apart, will diminish the understanding of the nature of each. Logos and pathologos are opposites. One encompasses natural systems, the other the irrational roots of human existence. In Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, or ET, the triadic order is presupposed for all that is said to have existence, since all living things possess the qualities of existence, power, and an activity resulting from its power. It is for this reason we say that the pathologos has an existence, a vast power, and a particular activity similar in function to the intelligible ideas of the triadic order.

Several questions arise from reflecting on this paradigm of the pathologos. What is the nature and origin of its power and the source of its activity? Is there some reason that the paradigm creates not understanding but a false belief about the Self?

To surface these unsuspected false beliefs of the Self requires following a well-defined path of questions⁴ that may vary to meet the urgencies of the individual believer. These questions are designed to open up the subject's unsuspected problem. These same kinds of questions are also utilized in PMW dream analysis and in the study of daydreams; both present the subject with keys to understanding their pathologos that blocks their philosophical development. Thus, PMW is a non-interpretive system that seeks answers entirely drawn from the subject.

Through such questions PMW allows for the discovery of the origin of a kind of human problem that can be traced to early learning experiences under the direction of one's parents or surrogates. The learning is not a teaching because the lesson is not expressed in words, but for the child the learning is inculcated as an unsuspected false belief about the Self, or one's Self. This false belief is called in PMW a pathologos, a "sick logos," or "psychic parasite"⁵ that is transmitted through successive generations.

For the pathologos transmission to be effective, a paradigm in the form of the presence of a set of necessary conditions is required. The situation must be conducive to the introduction of the pathologos. (1) The young child must be in a free, open, self-engaging activity. (2) The parent, or surrogate, must appear in a unique and rare way—as noble, caring, and sincere. (3) The transmission scene must demonstrate the child's previous state to be in sharp contrast to or in violation of the way of being that the parent previously displayed. (4) The child recognizes a higher mode of being than what they had been experiencing. (5) By contrast, the child repudiates their past openness and sacrifices whatever activity they had been engaged in as empty of meaning. (6) The child judges themselves as inadequate and (7) adopts the parental way of life and accepts a role under the supervision of the ruler/leader. Here in a single act we see that the *appearance* of virtue on the part of the parent is the condition for sacrificing one's own goals, and one's way of being, and becoming a willing servant to another's wishes and desires. The subservience to authority and the fear of challenging authorities is the mark of being under the influence of the pathologos, and this is nothing other than the fear of engaging the mind on a more profound level.

From that state of openness (above stage 1) the child experiences the image of their parent appearing as sincere, knowing, caring, powerful, and even beautiful (stage 2), and its effect on the child is critical because the past experiences of the child are depreciated in comparison to what they are now experiencing. All that came before loses its significance, and time, as it were, starts with this event. Now, the child has an image of what it is to be caring, real, beautiful, and sincere, and they then judge everything in terms of this experience. Now they judge everything by “doing unto others what has been done to me”. Clearly, the experience is akin to profound experiences that bring about significant changes in oneself and that have an enduring influence on the life of the experiencer. By contrast, the child then sacrifices whatever they were doing in that early scene; they consider it trivial and void of meaning as they take on whatever role seems to follow from the new order they just experienced. As a result of this encounter they judge themselves as inferior and ignorant for not knowing what now seems so real, and so they form a false idea of themselves. Thus, in PMW the most significant stage in the transmission of the pathologos bears a similarity with profound experiences because both the experience of the transmission and the profound experience challenge and shape those who participate in them.

In respect to causes we can say that whether words are used or the attitudes that accompany such pathologos transmissions, this is the material cause of the pathologos. The transmissions must carry the urgency and importance of the transmission, which is its efficient cause. The message that is being communicated is the plan, the third cause, that is followed with amazing accuracy, while the final cause, or “that for the sake of which” it is unfolded, is the continuation of an inherited drama that establishes a kinship and loyalty of its members.

If the pathologos is an unsuspected false idea of the Self that continues its existence and has the power to transmit itself to another, then we must ask what power can overcome this powerful destructive kind of belief? We know perfectly well that until its origin and its consequences are understood, its existence will continue unabated. Equally, it follows that there will be no understanding of the Self as long as that kind of belief is securely held. When one overcomes the vicious pathologos one discovers a new freedom and regains an integrity to one’s life. From this awareness of the Self without the presence of the pathologos, one discovers the power of ridding oneself of what is false, or one sees a new truth about oneself. To possess the awareness of the Self is to realize its truth, for truth is the necessary condition for the awareness of the Self, but that can only be so if one has discovered the truth that the Self is pure and without ambiguity or falsehood. Thus, we can say that it is only when the truth about the Self is realized that truth is known with and in that very understanding of the Self. While other things may be judged true, it is only the Self that shines forth with the true Self since the Self is the embodiment of truth.

Thus, the pathologos is formed by the interactions of the elements, or parts, of the unity of these conditions, and it forms a whole that functions autonomously within the subject.

If any of the parts or elements do not function properly within this unity, or wholeness, then no pathologos is transmitted. Among the different kinds of wholes, the whole we call the pathologos dissipates when its function and purpose are comprehended. Thus, PMW possesses a kind of knowledge, that when applied to a willing individual, benefits the subject, and it is akin to the medical arts in that they too must master the way the parts function together, and when there is a mal-

function of any of the parts they can offer corrective procedures. The pathologos is a malfunction of the operations of the mind and PMW offers a corrective procedure to eliminate its destructive power and function.

Clearly, the imposition of a pathologos upon an immature subject is an act of injustice since it inhibits that subject from freely expressing their Self in meaningful ways. The fostering of false beliefs among the immature about the Self and reality is the root cause of the condition of ignorance and suffering of many. This practice is pervasive and it creates a class of people who turn against what has been forbidden to them and they become a class both hostile to reason and to the development of the mind.

Is there room for the pathologos within Proclus' understanding? Proclus expresses this idea when he argues that if there would be a "turn-towards that which is inferior (such as the pathologos) through intellect; in this way, self would not recognize that towards which it is turned, in as much as it is not that which is in self, but external to self." (Prop.162)⁶ Thus, the pathologos is not an object of knowledge since there is nothing to discover after an illusion or delusion has been dispelled. To the degree that the fictitious nature of the pathologos has been seen through it loses its power, and until its last element is finally perceived it persists. While the pathologos endures there is the captivity of the soul and diminished function of the mind, but with its demise there is an openness and freedom to experience and know that which is superior to the pathologos.

The Core idea of the Self:

Thus, the idea of Self is the core idea in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, as he says, "All that is caused, abides in Self, proceeds from Self and reverts to the cause of Self." (Prop.35). Once it is understood and realized its presence is known, and, by contrast, once the nature of the pathologos is realized and its implications recognized in one's life the pathologos loses its presence, vanishing.

To demonstrate this parallel between PMW and Proclus' *Elements of Theology* we will contrast the elements of the pathologos for those propositions in the *Elements of Theology*. If systems are similar in respect to their relations then in changing their key terms analogies are created. The result will confirm that such systems are part of a greater structure, a more comprehensive analogical one.

General characteristics of PMW and ET:

"All that is perfect, proceeds to the generation of those which it has the power to produce, by Self imitating the one source of wholes." (Proposition 25). The appearance of leader as awe inspiring creates the illusion of being the embodiment of truth, which if accepted has the power that imitates the source of wholes, or the One.

Internal dynamics of PMW and ET: Leader and members.

"Every leader by their very existence imparts that which is self primarily to other members of the group." (Prop.25). The leader of the pathologos drama imparts their false image of the self to other members of its family/clan. It brings its members a sense of loyalty and kinship that binds them together, which allows a participation in a different mode of being.

“All that is primarily inherent in a certain nature of the beings, is present to all the members that are arranged according to that nature, according to one logos and in the same way.”(Prop.19). Indeed, analogously, the nature of the pathologos has a mode of being, it is present to all of the members of the family/clan, and each member has its role and beliefs, or its particular logos.

General contrast:

“All perfect generates those it has the power to produce imitations the one source of wholes.”(Prop.25). In Proclus wholes are arranged hierarchically with the highest term being most akin to the One, and can be called a demiurgos of wholes,⁷ (as in Platonic theology) and in the hierarchy of ideas they produce model-copy of themselves, or imitations. The pathologos is an imitation of the logos.

“Every producing cause brings into existence things like to itself before the unlike.”(Prop.28). Every pathologos brings into existence things like itself before the unlike. Each pathologos passes on from prior generations to the present providing likenesses of itself.

“Every procession is perfected through the likeness of those that are secondary in relation to those that are primary.”(Prop.29). Every pathologos has a character or image that is passed on to each and every one of its members and its commonness must share a likeness with one another.

“Every God {pathologos} begins its own proper energy from itself. For the first God {pathologos} exhibits in itself the character of its presence among those that are secondary.”(Prop.131). For, every pathologos has its own energy and a distinctive character that is passed on to its members. It is by first establishing the characteristic which it imparts to the others that its presence always carries on its distinctive character.

“All the orders of the Gods are bound in union by an intermediary. For if all the processions of the Beings are perfected by those that are like.” (Prop.132). Every pathologos is like one another and the more like any are to one another the more perfect they are judged to be. This proposition concludes that it is in this way that it imparts to others “the super abundance of Goodness.”(Prop.35). And, we can add that every pathologos is transmitted with the belief that it too imparts a goodness to its members.

“On the one hand, every God (pathologos) is a beneficent monad or of unific goodness and each one, in so far as it is a God (pathologos), possesses this hyparxis.”(Prop.134). Every pathologos presents itself as a unific goodness, and each one possesses this fullness that is overflowing, or hyparxis. For each pathologos presents itself as a goodness that brings together and binds its members into its own private brand of excellence.

“The distinctive character of every divine order (pathologos) constantly traverses through all those that are secondary, and bestows itself on all the subordinate generations.”(Prop.145). The pathologos has its distinct character and moves through all its members, and its transmission passes through each generation.

“Every Cause insofar as being The Leader of Each Series, Imparts The Characteristic of Itself to The Whole Series; and That which That Cause Is Primarily, Each Self is This, in a diminished way.” The leader of the pathologos family/clan imparts the characteristic of it pathologos to the whole series

of its members since it is its cause, and each member participates in the pathologos in a diminished way as compared to its leader.(Prop.97)

The Soul and PMW:

“For that in which soul is present will participate in self motion. But that motion which with self imparts by its very presence must itself belong in a more primary way to the soul itself.” (Prop. 19). While the soul is under the influence of the presence of the pathologos it will obediently act out its instructions and conform with the image inherent in the pathologos, but it will be unable to reach and function in a primary way of the soul, which is, of course, to proceed rationally in all that it does.

“It follows that the order of souls originates from one primary soul and proceeds to diminution into the multitude of souls and in turn leads back to the one soul.”(Prop. 21) The order of those infused with the pathologos springs from one leader of the pathologos and proceeds through each member in a diminutive way and leads back to that pathologos.

The conflict:

There is a conflict in presenting the Self as the ultimate term in Platonic thought since we find Proclus assigning The One as the productive cause of all, (Prop.137) adding that “all that is divine exists by self, and unknowable, by being of-the-same-nature as the ineffable One.”(Prop.162), yet he also asserts that “Self is arranged analogous to The Good.”(Prop. 151) The same problem exists in Plato, for in his *Republic* the training of the philosopher-king includes the study of arithmetic, raising the question, “What after all is the One Self?”⁸ And, in his study of Solid Geometry he argues that this study cannot be taught since no one believes they lack the understanding and knowledge of the Self, so that there are neither teachers, nor students, nor any city that will support such a study of the Self.⁹ Indeed, the idea of the One and the Good cannot both be called the final terms since they are different, and it assumes that while all things can be labeled as one, the class cannot be called the One or the Good without violating the principle that a class name cannot be the same as its members.

If we ask what are the implications of the nature and functions of the pathologos in Philosophical Midwifery, we realize at once that the distinguishing mark that separates it from current models of psychotherapy is the use of the idea of necessary conditions and causes. For, the idea of cause is rejected by psychologists as being an unnecessary concept in the treatment and understanding of human psychological problems. The idea of cause would introduce a rationalism that is irreconcilable with the strict empiricism of Skinner, who follows the ideas of David Hume, Kant, and others. Psychotherapy assumes all psychological disorders are expressions of anxiety, but PMW notes that the consequence of the injustice of being subjected to the transmission of the pathologos creates not anxiety, but a pervasive wave of indifference and hostility directed against those not part of their clan/family.

Thus, it is because of the structural similarity between the Platonic vision presented in ET and PMW that we can say PMW belongs to the Homeric-Platonic tradition.¹⁰ In respect to psychology, their diagnostic manual, DSM IV, states that it does not assume to explain causes, rather it focus-

es on symptoms, or behaviors, of personal psychological disorders,¹¹ while PMW does not treat symptoms nor makes diagnoses, rather it seeks for the conditions and causes of such disorders.

Thus, PMW is not akin to current theories and practices of psychotherapy, but it offers a psychology of the soul to bring to completion the Platonic vision as it unfolds a philosophy of the Self.

Notes

1. Grimes, P. *Philosophical Midwifery: a paradigm for understanding human problems with a Validation Study by Regina Uliana*. Hyparxis Press (1998), Costa Mesa, California
2. Butler, Edward P. The Intelligible Gods in the Platonic Theology: Theology of Proclus. *Methexis* XXI (2008) pp.131-143, calls Proclus' *Theology* "the defining work of late antiquity".
3. Proclus, *The Theology of Plato*, translation: Thomas Taylor, Book VI, Chapter 2, Prometheus Press (1995)
4. Grimes, P. *Unblocking: Understand the Self and Overcome your Problems*. Pierre Grimes, Costa Mesa, CA(214)
5. Grimes, P. *Philosophical Midwifery*, p.19
6. *Proclus' Elements of Theology*, translation: Juan Balboa (2018) (See: noeticsocietycom) Prop. 162
7. Proclus, *Theology of Plato*, translation: Thomas Taylor, Prometheus Press, Book 5, Chapter 18. p.357
8. *Plato's Republic*, translation: Juan Balboa Book VII, *Arithmetic*, 525a. p.18
9. *Ibid. Republic, Book VII, Solid Geometry*, 528b-c, p.23
10. For the kinship between Homer's *Iliad* and PMW (see APPA Vol 1. No.1) note: a further analysis is required to demonstrate that the rational structure of Proclus' *Theology* is consistent with the Homeric theology.
11. DSM IV, American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Press Inc, 1994.

Pierre Grimes, Ph.D., is the founder of the philosophical counseling movement. His mode of philosophical counseling, Philosophical Midwifery, is an adaptation of Homeric and Socratic midwifery. The name 'Philosophical Midwifery' comes from Plato's *Theaetetus*. He is founder and President of the Noetic Society, for the study of dialogue and the dialectic. When the Noetic Society was incorporated in 1978, he became the Director of its Philosophical Midwifery Program. Pierre has authored numerous video-lectures and publications, and has given presentations both nationally and internationally. In 1983 Pierre was given the name Hui-An and sealed as the Dharma Successor to Chong-An (who was later given the name Myo-Bong) of the Chogye Buddhist order of Korea. Myo-Bong is the Patriarchal Dharma Successor of Venerable Hye-Am, the 33rd patriarch from Lin Chi. Pierre is on the Board of Directors of the APPA.

Correspondence: pierregrimes@ymail.com

